

135 Nuerland lacks the two raw materials that have played so important a part in the manufacture of primitive tools: iron and stone. Nuer have always been poor in iron objects. Till recently they possessed very few iron spears, cherished as heirlooms, but used instead the straightened horns of antelope and buck, ebony wood, and the rib-bones of giraffe, all of which are still used to-day, though almost entirely in dances (Fig. 11). Wooden hoes were used for gardening, and are still sometimes so used to-day. Iron bells (Fig. 4) are rare and highly prized even at the present time, and in the old days iron rings and bracelets were important pieces of property. Wooden bells and ivory and leather rings and bracelets took their place in common use. Nuer have no knowledge of smelting and little of the blacksmith's art. I have never seen a forge and, though there are certainly some blacksmiths, their art is crude and may be regarded as a recent innovation, at any rate in most parts of Nuerland. Spears bought from Arab merchants are beaten out in the cold.

135 Nuerland also lacks any kind of hard stone. Indeed, outside villages I have never seen a stone. They are sometimes brought from neighbouring areas and employed as hammers, for smoothing metal ornaments, for rubbing skins, and so on. Grinding grain seems to have been a recent introduction. The grinder is made from thornwood and the grindstone from baked marsh mud mixed with finely pounded potsherds (Fig. 12). With clay, mud, and sand, Nuer also make pots, grain-bins, pipes, toys, hearthstones, and firescreens; construct the walls of byres and huts; and coat floors and those parts of homesteads they wish to keep smooth and clean.

137 Nature, which denies them iron and stone, is niggardly in her gift of wood. Large trees are rare. Thornwood and low brushwood provide timber for building, spear-shafts, harpoon-shafts, clubs (Frontispiece and Plate VIII), pestles, neck-rests, baskets, and winnowing trays. Probably no trees in Nuerland are suitable for carving and Nuer possess no wooden utensils. Even the ebony they use for making spears is not found in their country. Ambatch-trees grow in some parts of the swamp areas and from it is made an object which serves as a parrying stick, tobacco pouch, pillow, and seat (Plate XXIX). Byre and kraal fires are fed with dried dung, and wood fuel is only employed in the kitchen—grasses and millet stalks sometimes being used as a substitute. Grasses, millet stalks, and some plants are also used for various purposes: rafters, windscreens, thatching, cord, basketwork, &c. Gourds are cultivated for dairy utensils.

[372] 237 Lacking iron and stone Nuer thus make use of vegetable and earthy materials instead. Animal products are also a valuable

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village is not an unsegmented unit but is a relation between a number of smaller units.

The village is a very distinct unit. It is sometimes referred to as *thur*, a ridge of high ground, but generally as *cieng*, a word which may be translated 'home', but which has such a variety of meanings that we shall devote a special section to it. A village comprises a community, linked by common residence and by a network of kinship and affinal ties, the members of which, as we have seen, form a common camp, co-operate in many activities, and eat in one another's byres and windscreens. A village is the smallest Nuer group which is not specifically of a kinship order and is the political unit of Nuerland. The people of a village have a feeling of strong solidarity against other villages and great affection for their site, and in spite of the wandering habits of Nuer, persons born and bred in a village have a nostalgia for it and are likely to return to it and make their home there, even if they have resided elsewhere for many years. Members of a village fight side by side and support each other in feuds. When the youths of a village go to dances they enter the dance in a war line (*dep*) singing their special war chant.

A cattle camp, which people of a village form in the drought and in which members of neighbouring villages participate, is known as *wec*. While this word has the meaning of 'camp' in contrast with *cieng*, 'village', both words are used in the same general sense of local community. Thus when it is said of a certain clan that they have no *wec* we are to understand that they nowhere in a tribal section or village form a dominant nucleus of the community and that, therefore, no local community takes its name from them. A large camp is called after the dominant lineage in it or after the village community who

115

621

[111]



FIG. 11. Horn
and ebony
spears.

836 in sexual relations with girls. Before initiation boys may go to dances, but they merely watch and do not take part in them. After initiation they go with the other youths of the village and form part of the dancing group of their lineage (*deŋ*). When the dancing is over they seize the hands of the girls and sit and flirt with them. A boy will now commence permanent love affairs with girls, and a girl will be recognised by his friends as his love (*ŋunde*). No uninitiated boy would stand a chance of having a relationship of this kind with a girl, however large he might be, as she would merely laugh at him and call him a boy and tell him to go and become initiated. It is true that boys before initiation will have congress with small girls, but this is not socially recognised, and if his elders hear of it they will tell him not to be a fool as he is only a boy, but after initiation it is not only none of their business what he does, but also he is expected, nay, compelled, by custom to embark upon courtship.

411 An initiated boy is now invested with two external signs of manhood besides the scars on his forehead. He is given a spear by his father and 884 also a bullock, which he had generally been promised before the operation. If he is lucky he will also get a bullock from a maternal or paternal uncle. 421 A boy will seldom possess a spear of his own and if he carries one he will almost certainly be found to have borrowed it from a relative though he may become the owner of a fishing spear. The possession of a spear is a sign of manhood and it is an object of great pride. One is surprised at the real feeling a Nuer expresses for his spear, almost as though it were animate and not a mere weapon. He is never tired of sharpening and polishing it. It is always in his hand, not only when fighting, hunting and travelling, but also when dancing, leaping behind his bullocks, playing with his comrades, and even when he lays it down it is never far from his side. As the Nuer possess no knives a man's spear does service not only on those occasions when Africans generally make use of it, but on those occasions when other peoples use a knife, for culinary purposes, cutting leather in tether making, cutting ox's hide for a bed-rug, and other purposes.

233 A boy is even prouder when he becomes the owner of a bullock and 554 is invested with a bullock name. Even a small boy will speak of his 553 father's bullocks as "our bullocks," and will often regard one of them, 421 the calf of the cow he habitually milks, as his own special one. But it is only his in the general psychological sense of family communion. It

252 tray. The dura can be pounded as fine as flour, but that involves much physical labour. The woman frequently chants a song as she pounds.

415 The household furnishings vary in number, but in most of the average homes the following articles which are considered necessary (Fig. 4) by the Nuer are to be found.

A large earthen vessel for carrying water.

An earthen cooking-pot.

A long-necked gourd having a small hole in the end of the neck. This is used as a milk-pail; milk may also be churned in it by taking hold of the neck and shaking the gourd vigorously to and fro.

Several half-gourds of various sizes which are used as dishes for food; the smaller ones may be used as drinking cups.

A number of mussel shells for use as spoons. Spoons are also made of the horn of the antelope.

A clay pipe with a long stem—this is much in evidence.

A large earthen container for dura (kaffir corn).

Network bags made out of grass rope. These are used to hold gourds of various sizes.

A large basket, woven in openwork pattern, to hold various possessions when travelling.

411 A spear and a fishing spear.

A big-headed club, and also smaller clubs.

513 A ring made of cane-leaves is used as a pillow by the women. The pillow for men is made out of a piece of a tree and has three legs. Part of a tree is chosen where the branches fork in the desired direction.

854 A baby basket woven of a certain pliable kind of wood, and also a grass mat to cover it with.

352 Skins of sheep are used as rugs to sit on, and the skin of the waterbuck makes an ideal bed.

354 A fire, with earthen shield to protect it from the wind,

14: Hoffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

291
● 411
573

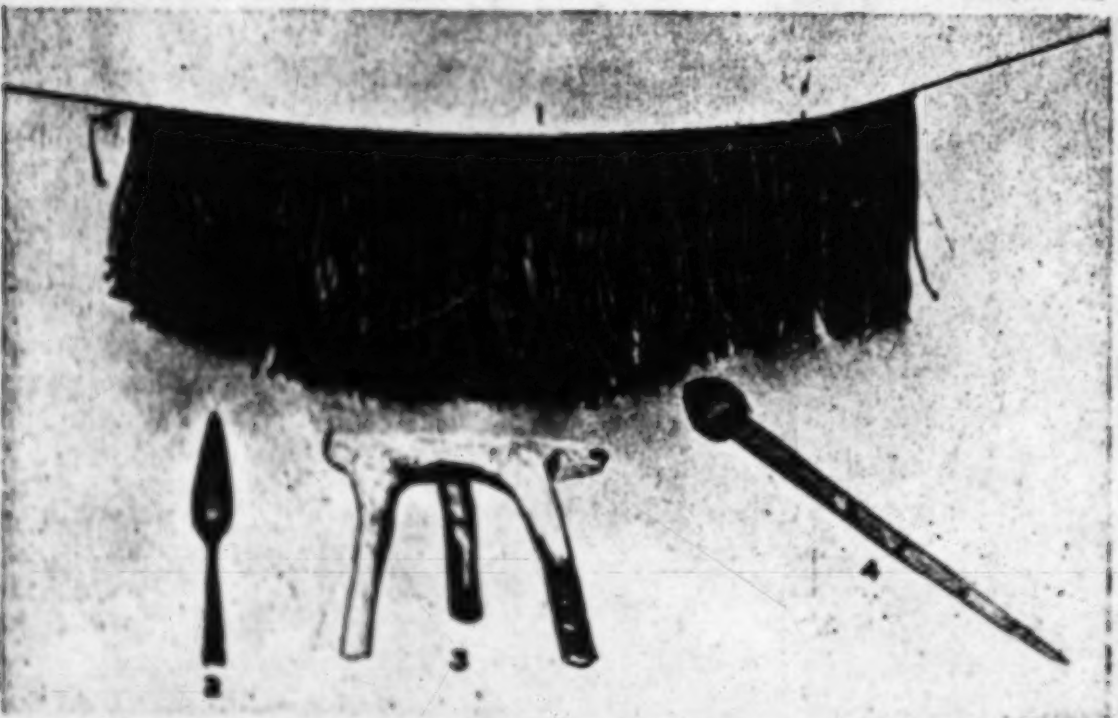


Fig. 4. ESSENTIAL ARTICLES

1. Short grass skirt. 2. Blade of spear. 3. Pillow (for men). 4. Club

[Facing p. 32]

641 cattle as they call it), they certainly ought not to object
651 when the Nuer raid the Dinka and take their cattle.

641 The Nuers learn to trust the District Commissioner
and to respect his decisions, even though they be averse
to their cause. They quite often prefer having him to
settle a case rather than their Nuer chief. And yet one of
the most respected and best loved of District Commis-
sioners was killed by a Nuer recently.

164 In the spring of 1929 an epidemic of what was at first
744 thought to be smallpox was reported in several villages.
There were no fatalities, which is very unusual in Nuerland,
for smallpox is very virulent and takes a heavy toll of life.
The Nuer is accordingly much afraid of this disease. A
clinic asked the doctor at Malakal to send vaccine, which he
did, and many were vaccinated. The fact that the Govern-
ment had sent vaccine for them and wanted to help them
made a great impression upon the Nuer. Thus they
realized that the Government did have something they
needed and wanted to give it to them.

000 In time they may learn that they not only need what
others can give them, but that they need to make their con-
tribution to the world and to life outside of their own tribe.

411 There are not many guns among the Nuer. They
depend upon the spear as their weapon, and it is usually
not far from its owner's side. From boyhood on they
are adepts at using the spear.

177 In the winter of 1928-9 the District Commissioner who
was stationed at Nasser as his head-quarters had three
aeroplanes come to Nasser. They stayed three days, their
pilots being his guests. He wanted his Nuer to see aéro-
planes at close range. He invited the people to take rides
in them—the object being to show them that, while the
aeroplane could be used for war purposes, it might also
be used in times of peace. His interpreter was persuaded

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE VII

301
411
145



Youth and boy
[facing p. 172]

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acts, or features of them, we are sometimes compelled to make the attempt, as in this excursus on the spear, by the very emphasis given to them by the culture we are trying to understand. 7P2

Since we have no spears ourselves and nothing which takes their place in our lives it is difficult for us to appreciate their importance for Nuer. Nuer have no knives, other than that (*ngom*) used for cutting the marks of manhood at initiation, so that their fighting-spears, besides their use as weapons, have to serve where other peoples use knives.¹ A man's fighting-spear (*mor*) is constantly in his hand, forming almost part of him—when he is fighting, hunting, travelling, herding, dancing, displaying himself with his own, playing with his comrades, and so on—and when he lays it down it is within his reach; and he is never tired of sharpening and polishing it, for a Nuer is very proud of his spear. In writing a preliminary account of Nuer age-sets many years ago and without reference to the symbolic significance of the spear I wrote that 'one is surprised at the real feeling a Nuer expresses for his spear, almost as though it were animate and not a mere weapon'. Later I came to realize better that in a sense it is animate, for it is an extension and external symbol of the right hand, which stands for the strength, vitality, and virtue of the person. It is a projection of the self, so when a man hurls his spear he cries out either 'my right hand' or the name of the ox with which he is identified. 411

The spear, being an extension of the right hand, stands for all that the right hand stands for, for what is wrong, violent, and vital, and consequently for masculinity and hence for the paternal kin and the lineage. Therefore during the discussions about bride-wealth in the byre of the bride's home on her wedding day the bridegroom's people sit on the right side of the byre and the bride's people on the left side. Therefore, also, when the carcasses of oxen sacrificed at marriage ceremonies are divided among the kin, the right fore and hind legs are the portions of the father's brothers and sisters and the left fore and hind legs are the portions of the mother's brothers and sisters. The left side symbolizes evil 826
811

¹ Being the only thing they have which cuts and is therefore suitable for sharing—their other spears only pierce—the verbal form of the word for fighting-spear, *mor*, besides its meaning of 'to spear' means 'to cut' or 'to share half'. When used in the last sense it often refers to ritual sharing of the head, and it may thus be used for the whole ceremony of which sharing of the head forms part, as the final marriage ceremony of consummation and communion in communion with death.

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826 handed man that his left hand is his right hand.
811 It is the quality of leftness, not the thing that is left, the hand itself, which is significant for them. Similarly, the left half of the severed carcass of a sacrificial animal is not intrinsically evil. It is always eaten by someone. It is bad symbolically, not in itself, and symbolically only in certain contexts or for certain people.

411 It is suggested that the spear as a projection of
885 the right hand symbolizes the vitality of man,
562 the manhood of man with the associations of lineage values that go with it. It is within the logic of the representation that we speak only of men. The spear stands for masculinity. Women do not bear fighting-spears. The spear does not go with femininity. Hence also boys do not bear fighting-spears till at their initiation to manhood [38] they are given them by their fathers. Before this event they are something in between men and women, and this is shown by the fact that they milk the cows, a feminine task that men may not undertake. That neither women nor boys bear spears means that they do not go to war and also that they do not sacrifice. It is not just that a woman may not slaughter the sacrificial victim—it is not, in any case, important who slaughters it—but that, not being able to bear the spear, she cannot make the sacrificial invocation, which is made by the spear in the right hand as well as by the mouth. She can indeed address Spirit at sacrifice, but if she does so she prays (*paŋ*); she does not invoke (*ŋem*). This is understandable when we think of the spear as an extension of the right hand and hence as representing strength, masculinity, and goodness. Sacrifice, like war, belongs to that side of life, what we ourselves call the *spear-side*.¹

¹ I was told that a wife may act as master of ceremonies to her husband's place and shout out the spear-name of his clan at a wedding. This is the *war ghat* mentioned later.



FIG. 4
Instrument used
in wedding ceremonies

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It is important here, and before we proceed further with the argument, to note that the spear we are concerned with is the *mut*, the metal fighting-spear (or, in a more restricted sense, spear-head), the only spear used in sacrifice. It is not a *bidh*, a metal fishing-spear, and it is not a *giit*, a fighting-spear fashioned out of substances other than metal. We have further to bear in mind that though spears are now easily obtained by purchase from Arab traders this is a very recent development. There is no iron in Nuerland, and what metal spears the Nuer used to possess were procured in one way or another from neighbouring peoples, and it is certain that till recently there were very few of them. Nuer made up for the deficiency by fashioning spears from horn and bone and hard wood. Spears fashioned from these materials were still plentiful when I was living in Nuerland, though they were taking on more and more a purely sentimental and ceremonial value, being often used in dances but seldom for fighting and hunting. Since, however, the spears of the ancestors, the names of which are cried out in invocations, were iron fighting-spears, and since Nuer could not have done without some of these cutting blades, there must always have been a certain number of them, and also a certain number of iron fishing-spears (for which horn, bone, and wood substitutes are unsuitable), but, as Dr. Howell has pointed out, they were few in number, this accounting, in his opinion, for the high value—several head of cattle—placed upon them.¹ I agree with him that it must have been very rare for a man to have had more than one *mut*, the *giit* spears being regarded as supplementary to it. This must consequently have been a very valuable possession and, if lost, most difficult to replace; and it was not just a private possession but a family heirloom passed from father to son down the generations. This does not mean that it was a relic. It was for practical use and therefore when worn was presumably replaced; otherwise one would see these ancestral spears today. However, the age of a spear has no great significance for Nuer. For them,

It is not a sacrificial invocation. It must be a very rare occurrence for a woman to play this role. Probably she can only take the part if she is acting on behalf of the bridegroom's family and hence holds in her hand, not a spear, but the instrument called *dang* (Fig. 4), and also if she is an old woman, of whom Nuer say 'she has become a man'. There is one occasion when women bear spears. Twins go through a fictional wedding before they can go through a real one. In this ceremony men array themselves as women, and women as men.

¹ P. P. Howell, 'On the Value of Iron among the Nuer', *Man*, 1907, No. 144.

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●41/ even if the spear a man's father gives him at his initiation has been bought from an Arab merchant, and is not in fact the spear the father received from his father and the father's father from his father, it is ideally so regarded and thus serves as a symbol of filiation. The spear is thus a point at which two complex social representations meet, that of the person and that of the lineage. Consequently I do not think that the high assessment of spears in cattle can be assigned to scarcity alone or even that scarcity was at any time the primary consideration. Spears, both fighting- and fishing-spears, were something more, and fighting-spears something much more, than weapons of war or of the chase. They were almost parts of the person. I have seen Nuer enraged when neighbours have borrowed their spears without permission, especially if they have lost them, their anger being out of all proportion to the offence if we think of the matter solely in terms of economic value, for the economic value of spears is negligible at the present day. It is the audacity and the insult which outrage the owner, as though someone had taken, and perhaps lost, part of his person; and all the more so in the case of the fighting-spear, with which are bound up his manhood and his participation in his lineage, as we see from the manner of his receiving it at his initiation.

41/ 88/ I have discussed elsewhere¹ the ritual of initiation and I do so again in connexion with the role of cattle in Nuer religion. All that need be said here is that when a boy is initiated into manhood and takes on the full responsibilities of that status he is presented by his father with a *mut*, a metal fighting-spear, and an ox—the two objects in which, as I have said, the whole drama of sacrifice is centred. I discuss here only the spear. A boy may before initiation possess a fishing-spear, but even today he is most unlikely to own a fighting-spear. Even should he do so, he would still be presented with a spear by his father at his initiation, for it is a ceremonial gift expressing formal recognition of his manhood and all that that means in the social life of the Nuer, and also the handing over by one generation to another. It is not just a spear, but a new status also that he is being given. The boy is now boy no longer but man and warrior and soon to be husband and father. He takes part in feuds and wars and raids. He also for the first time engages in dances and displays with oxen, both of which among the Nuer are martial exercises as well as play intimately

¹ 'The Nuer: Age-Sex', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1936.

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associated with courtship; and also in the pursuits of herding and 41/
hunting. All these activities require the use of the spear, but it is 38/
important that we recognize that it is not the acquisition of a
weapon, whatever its economic value might have been in the past,
nor even its utility, great though that may be, that gives a crucial
significance to the gift of a spear at initiation. Its significance is
moral, not merely utilitarian. It is not the spear itself, nor its
possession, which is stressed but the activities associated with it:
war and raiding, dancing and display, and herding. The uses of
the spear itself and the evaluations of its uses as an index of social
personality are blended, so that the spear is not just a weapon but
also something which stands for a very complex set of social
relations.

But the investment of a youth with a spear at his initiation 41/
would seem to be something more, for, as we will see in discussing 38/
the sacrificial role of cattle, initiation is not only into the social life
of adults but also into a new relationship with the cattle which 23/
has an important religious side to it. There is now established an
identification, deriving from the sacrificial situation, between the
initiates and cattle and, looked at from this point of view, the rites
of initiation may be said to have a sacramental character. The boy
enters into communion with the spirits and ghosts of his lineage
through the cattle. The spear of the cutting (initiation) is thus a
symbol of a sacramental change as well as of a change in social
status. In both symbolic aspects it is an extension of, and stands
for, the right arm and represents strength, strength of the soul as
well as strength of the body of the person; and, as I shall attempt
to show, in both the symbolism is also a representation of the
collective strength of the lineage to which the person belongs.

I have suggested that the fighting spear has a symbolic meaning 41/
for Nuer besides what it means for them as a weapon and tool— 782
that it is a projection of the self and stands for the self. This is
most important for an understanding of Nuer sacrifice. Its mani-
pulation in the most common, and for a study of religion the most
significant, sacrifices, the personal and piacular ones, expresses, if
our interpretation is right, the throwing of the whole person into
the intention of the sacrifice. It is not only said but also thought,
desired, and felt. Not only the lips make it but also the mind, the
will, and the heart. This interpretation makes the miming with
the spear intelligible for, as an extension of the right arm, it stands

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411 for the whole person.¹ It is for this reason that a spear must be
782 carried during the invocation and not in order to slay the animal
at the end of it. Other invocations by other men may follow before
that is done, and the quick dramatic thrust into its heart which
concludes the rite may be made by anyone, and not necessarily
by a man who has made an invocation or by a spear used in the
invocation.

411 But we have also to note that on many sacrificial occasions—
782 those of a collective kind held in structural situations—when a
614 man makes an invocation he does so as the representative of his
clan (where 'clan' is used in this context 'clan or lineage' is to be
understood—a man may be speaking in reference to his maximal
lineage). He identifies himself with the clan by identifying his
spear with that of the ancestor of the clan. It is his own spear
which he brandishes but the name of the spear he shouts out as
he does so is that of the spear of the ancestor of the clan, the clan
spear-name. This is characteristic of sacrifices of the collective
type, and it is towards them that the discussion is now directed.

[552] Each of the Nuer clans has a spear-name and sometimes a large
lineage of a clan has a secondary name which is different from that
of another lineage of the same clan. This spear-name is shouted
out by a representative of the clan while he brandishes a spear in
his right hand, in war, at weddings, and on other public occasions
when the clan as a whole is concerned—ideally, that is, and never
actively and corporately. It is especially shouted out as an exor-
cium to sacrificial invocations on occasions of collective signifi-
cance (pp. 188-9). It is 'mut guera', 'the spear of our fathers'. On
such of these occasions as require the services of a leopard-skin
priest he calls out the spear-name 'mut Gesak', 'spear of Gen', a
spear-name which combines the representation of the priestly
office with that of the Nuer as a whole.

It is essential to note that, with two exceptions, no actual spears
of the ancestors of the clans exist, and it is not held by Nuer that
they ever did exist, except in the sense that the ancestors had their
own spears. The virtue is in the idea of 'the spear of our fathers',
not in any material clan relic. Consequently, in invocations any
spear will serve the purpose of the rite and represent that of the

¹ Among the Shilluk the officiant rubs his spear on the back of the victim, as
the Nuer places his right hand on its butt (D. S. Opler, *Shilluk Nuer and
Karamoj, op. cit.* p. 195).

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ancestor of the clan and hence symbolize the clan as a whole. Any 411 ●
 spear will do, but, for the reason I have stated, there must be a 782
 spear; and when Nuer sitting in my tent recounted to me what is 614
 said in invocations they gestured with their right hands as though
 they held spears in them, for they found it difficult to speak the
 words without making the gestures, just as in recounting what is
 said in prayers (*paŋ*) they found it difficult to do so without moving
 outstretched hands up and down.

Published literature on the Nuer records information about 411
 only two actual spears of clans. The one about which we are told 614
 most is the spear, called *wia*, of the Gaatgunkir clan, who are 077
 regarded by all, including themselves, as being of Dinka origin;
 and the spear is a Dinka, and not a Nuer, type of spear. A mys-
 terious origin and power are attributed to it. It is believed to have
 been held by Kir, the ancestor of the clan, when he was cut out of
 the gourd in which he was found, and it is also associated with the
 air-spirit *wia*, which is regarded as being in some sense immanent
 in it. When I was in Nuerland it was in the charge of a family of
 leopard-skin priests of the Tar lineage of the eastern Gaajak tribe.
 I did not myself see it, but it has been described by Mr. H. C. Jack-
 son, who saw it in 1922 near the Filler river.¹ He records that it
 was decorated with cowrie shells and beads and was housed in a
 special grass hut where visitors treated it with great deference. He
 says that it was prayed and sacrificed to, especially before raids on
 the Dinka and Burun peoples;² that if two sections of the Nuer
 wished to engage in fighting among themselves it would be
 placed between them to prevent an engagement; and that oaths
 were taken on it. I was told that only old people would look upon
 it. The importance of this spear to our discussion of clan spear-
 names is that, as I will explain later, all such spear-names have an

¹ H. C. Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 and 173-4.

² We are probably so concerned, in view of Nuer religious assumptions in
 general, that Nuer respect (*ŋak*) the spear and pray and sacrifice to the spirit
wia, which is in the sky as well as in the spear. Mr. R. T. Johnson reached the
 same conclusion with regard to a similar spear among the Bor Dinka. He observes
 that 'the spear by itself, except by association and as a symbol, is not sacred'
 (*op. cit.*, p. 175). Dr. Lindhardt tells me that when the Government, with remark-
 able lack of imagination, confiscated and removed this spear hut it should
 have been a force of opposition to the administration the Dinka's faith was in no way
 injured. The only result was that the spirit associated with the spear, no longer
 having a recognized material symbol in a single place, manifested itself all over
 the tribal territory, defying any further incursions.

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411 association with the spirit *wiu* through the further association of
 614 this spirit with lightning and hence with the idea of striking, so
 that the spear *wiu*, perhaps also because it has a material existence,
 has become the prototype of clan 'spears'. Of the other spear, that
 of the Thing clan and tribe, who occupy a territory I have not
 myself visited, we are told by Mr. B. A. Lewis only in whose pos-
 session it is and that it is called *mut bah thiang*.¹ Dr. P. P. Howell,
 who gives its name as *mut bar thiang*, tells me that he has not seen
 it but Nuer have described it to him as being nearly worn through
 with much polishing. It is unknown whether any cultic practices
 like those I have mentioned above are connected with it.

411 Apart from the Gaatgankir and the Thiang spears the spear-
 614 symbols of the Nuer clans and lineages are only names. Through
 613 the association of a tribal community with the clan dominant in
 652 it the spear-name of this clan is shouted out in invocations when
 the whole tribe goes to war but, except in this context, which I
 discuss below, in which a political group is merged conceptually
 with a clan or lineage, it is only called out in reference to a descent
 group as an exclusive group. Thus, when I asked a Wot tribesman
 whether his tribe had a tribal spear he replied: 'We have many
 spears. Our lineage (go) has one spear, another lineage has another
 spear, a third lineage has a different spear, and so on.' By 'spear'
 he meant a spear-name, not an actual spear. Consequently, if two
 [572] persons have the same spear-name there is likelihood of agnatic
 relationship, and spear-names are therefore often spoken of in
 connexion with proposed marriages. One hears Nuer saying in
 discussions about the permissibility of a proposed marriage 'what
 about their spears?', 'they have the same spear, they cannot
 marry', or 'their spear is different to ours, we can marry their
 daughters'. At a wedding the masters of ceremonies on the bride's
 side and on the bridegroom's side, each acting as representative
 711 of his clan begin their formal announcements that the marriage
 614 negotiations have reached a successful conclusion (*twoc ghok*)
 613 by shouting out their clan spear-names. The spear-name is also
 677 shouted out by the master of ceremonies as the opening words of
 652 the sacrificial invocation he makes when a Dinka boy is adopted

¹ B. A. Lewis, op. cit., p. 81.

² Should the two clans have the same spear-name this is not always a bar to
 the union, for secondary spear-names may indicate that they belong to different
 clans, or other circumstances may be taken into consideration.

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into the lineage of the man who has given him domicile, the expression for adopting being either *lath bushni*, to be given shares (in sacrificial meats) and hence to be given agnation, or *lath muot*, to be given a spear (-name), and hence to be made a member of the clan. He also shouts it out in sacrificial invocations at mortuary ceremonies, at settlement of blood-feuds, at initiations, and on other occasions which concern the whole clan (p. 188). When, as mentioned above, clan and tribe are identified politically in war and raiding a representative of the dominant clan of the tribe brandishes a spear and calls out the spear-name of his clan on behalf of the whole tribe. This man, called *ngul*,¹ is usually, perhaps always, a leading man of the senior lineage of the dominant clan, that descended from the eldest son of the ancestor of the clan. Thus in the Lou tribe this rite is performed by a man of the Gaalik lineage of the Jinaca clan. Likewise the Tar lineage who have charge of the *wis* spear are descendants of Thiang, the eldest son of the founder of the clan; and the Thiang clan who own the *thiang* spear are descended from Thiang, the eldest son of Gen.

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I cannot always explain the meaning of these spear-names or even translate them, and Nuer themselves cannot always say for certain what they mean, for they arose in ancient days. It is clear, however, that they are charged with symbols expressing the unity and continuity of clans and lineages. I give a few examples, choosing those in which the meaning is more or less evident. The Jiru lineage have *must tora*, spear of the monarchid. This lineage respects monarchids, whether they be man or beast. The Gaalik clan have *must yier*, spear of the stream, because their ancestor came out of a stream. The Gaalnaca clan have *must ghama*, spear of the thigh. This seems to refer to the loins of the ancestor from whom they sprang. The Gaalik lineage of this clan have the secondary spear-name *must tong*, spear of the spear-shaft, because the *ngul*, whom I have referred to above, of the Lou tribe is of this lineage. He uses a spear-shaft in war ritual. The Gaaleak clan have *must leak*, the word *leak* being simply, it would seem, taken from the clan name itself. Many leopard-skin priests are members

¹ He is also called *ngul ghok*, *ngul* of cattle, an expression which probably refers to the taking of money cattle on raids, and *gwan must*, possessor of the spear. As he may break a spear-shaft in two and throw the pieces in the direction of the enemy he is further known as *gwan tong*, possessor of the spear-shaft. I was told that he may also invoke God for success in hunting in time of famine.

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411 of this clan and, as I have explained, they use *mut Geaka*, spear
 614 of Gee, as an alternative expression. The Thiang lineage have a
 613 secondary spear-name *mut Thiang*, spear of Thiang, which is the
 552 name of their ancestor.

When a man calls out his clan spear-name he often does so with embellishments, which are further symbolical representations of the clan. They refer to its ancestor, its spirits, its totema, its ghosts, its cattle, or its origin and traditions. Thus a Gaatgankir clansman in making invocations adds to *mut wiu* such expressions as *mut kwe*, *mut jengemo me coali Kir*, and *mut guara*. *Kwe* is the fish-eagle and also a colour distribution of cattle. The shining of the spear is likened to the white face of the fish-eagle against its black body and to the white splash on the head of a dark coloured cow or ox. *Jaangemo me coali Kir* means 'that Dinka who is called Kir' and refers to the Dinka origin of the clan. *Mut guara* means 'spear of our fathers'. The spear in the hand of the speaker, the spear *wiu*, the spear used to cut open the gourd in which the ancestor was found, and the spirit *wiu* all seem to be fused in the representation. In a similar manner the Gaawar clan may add to their spear-name *mut wung*, spear of the eye (I think), such expressions as *mut nhial*, *mut puara*, and *mut kwosh nyota*. I do not know why the spear is called 'spear of the eye' (if that is the right translation). *Nhial* is the firmament and *puar* is a cloud. Their ancestor fell from the sky and the clan is therefore associated with sky, clouds, and rain. When he fell he had in his hand a sprig of the *nyot* tree, a tree associated with rain. Hence the *kwosh nyota*, the spirit of the *nyot* tree.

Thus the spear-name is either that of the ancestor of the lineage or clan or in some way signifies him, and the elaborations of it, such as by reference to a spirit or a totem, are also just different ways of denoting the lineage or clan as a whole; for the name of the ancestor stands for the whole clan, both here and elsewhere. We have noted earlier (p. 163) how in myth: a lineage is personified for the purpose of the action of the story, the name of the lineage or of its tribal territory being used to indicate its ancestor. Nuer sometimes even insert the name of a lineage into a genealogy as its founder, though the form of the word shows that it is the name of a group and not of a person; or they give the founder a composite name, appending the name of the lineage to the personal name, for example, Nyang Gaalik, Nyang being the name of the person and Gaalik the name of the lineage of his descendants.

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name of the person and Gaalik the name of the lineage of his descendants.

I have attempted to show that the spear brandished in sacrificial invocations stands for the person and that when this person speaks as a representative and on behalf of the clan, as he does in collective sacrifices, it stands for the clan. In the one case it is the right hand (vitality) of the individual and in the other the right hand (vitality) of the ancestor (the clan) which is emphasized. In the second case the spear is closely associated with the idea of the clan as a battle host.

When we ask why clans should be symbolized by a spear, or rather by the idea of a spear contained in a spear-name, and not by something else, we cannot give an acceptable answer in terms of the scarcity, and therefore high value, of iron nor in terms of simple utility. The symbol is not *yieih* or *you*, iron.¹ Nor is it the *fish*, the fishing-spear, which is perhaps even more essential for Nuer than the fighting-spear, for they have no substitute for it and could not survive without a good supply of fish. It is the *must*, the iron fighting-spear. The fact that the wood, horn, and bone pointed spears do not figure as symbols might suggest that it is because it is made of iron, which lasts longer and makes a more efficient weapon, that the *must* is the symbol of clans, but it appears to me to be a more satisfactory explanation that it is because the *must* not only stands for the right hand and hence vitality but is also the symbol of going to war and of making sacrifice.

The word *must*, besides meaning a fighting-spear, has a general sense of taking part in war and raiding: '*ce Nath we must*', 'the Nuer went raiding'; '*ce must nang Jaang*', 'war was taken (by the Nuer) to the Dinka'. The idea expressed by the word *must* in these examples is not so much the general idea of war and raiding as the idea of a collectivity, the clan or lineage in its political or tribal embodiment, going to war or going on a raid. Hence Father Kiggen correctly translates '*te ke must marid*' (his spelling) as 'they have a big army'.² By synecdoche 'spear' stands for 'battle host'.

¹ It is true that Nuer link any *must* to taking an oath (p. 197), but I regard this as being a derivation from taking a spear, for which any *must* stands as a substitute, in the same way as the beautiful sides of the Gargashle clan, son, and daughter, of iron, derive from the *uio* spear. The words *yieih*, *must*, and *yieih*, to spear or to oath, are surely connected.

² J. Kiggen, op. cit., p. 106. One may ask, in the light of this discussion about

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552 It is, I believe, in some such sense of the clan militant that we
 411 should interpret the spear symbolism of the clans. Nuer always
 614 speak of 'spear' where I have used the expression 'spear-name'.
 721 However, not only are there in almost all cases no actual spears,
 but it is not even the idea of any particular spear that they have
 in mind. What they have in mind is the clan as a whole for which
 the spear stands as a symbol not just as a spear but as representing
 the collective strength of the clan in its most conspicuous cor-
 porate activity, for clans and lineages are most easily and dis-
 tinctly thought of as collectivities—through their identification
 with tribes and tribal segments—in relation to war. That the
 representation is of the clan as a battle host is shown by the Nuer
 statement about their clan spears that they only exist in the sense
 that 'they are in the mouths of men when they go to battle'. Two
 remarks made by Nuer give further support to an interpretation
 along these lines. One man said of all clan spears that *'tsokdiin e
 wio'*, 'their origin is wio', and that *wio* is the *breath*, spirit, of all
 clan spears. There was some discussion about this remark among
 Nuer present, and I gathered from it that all clan spears in this
 wide and symbolic sense of the word *wio* as the battle host signify
 the clan as a social group in relation to God in the conception of
 him as Lord of Hosts. The man could not have meant that other
 clan spears were derived or copied from the spear *wio*. That would
 have made no sense, both because there are no actual spears and
 also because the Gaangankir clan who own the spear *wio* are
 regarded by everybody as a Dinka clan of later origin than the
 true Nuer clans. That a spiritual conception of *wio* was meant is
 further evident from a remark made to me by another Nuer, a
 man of exceptional ability, that when the Gaangankir clan reach
 ten generations from their ancestor Kir—when they have grown
 up, so to speak—they will doubtless cease to respect (*thok*) the

the *wio*, why it is that the title of spiritual leader in Dinka-land is taken from
 the *fighting-spear* (*thok*) instead of from the *fighting-spear*. An explanation might
 be put forward in terms of the analysis I have presented. Whereas among the
 Nuer the *fighting-spear* is the symbol of the clan because what is being sym-
 bolized is exclusiveness and opposition, among the Dinka the *fighting-spear* is the
 symbol of spiritual leadership because what is being symbolized is inclusiveness
 and unity. This is a guess but it receives some support from the fact that among
 the Nuer, as any one in western Dinka-land, when a leopard-skin priest goes to
 visit a friend he is accompanied by a kinsman called the *green hawk*, the master
 of the *fighting-spear*, which is the title of the Dinka spiritual leader. However,
 this may be a loan from the Dinka.

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spear *wia*, as they do at present, and will respect (the word is here 552
used to balance the statement and not literally) only its name. As 411 ●
we should put it, they will not then feel the need for a material 614
symbol of the spiritual relationship, and a verbal or ideational 721
symbol will suffice. The association of clan spears with the spirit
wia is clear to us when we recall that the spirit is also associated
with lightning with which, in this hypostasis, God strikes as man
strikes with the spear.¹

In invocations in which clans are involved as such God is 552
appealed to, as I have explained earlier, in some refraction by 411
which he is figured as their patron. This is the '*kwoth gwara*', 'the 782
God of our fathers'. It is on such occasions also that the spear-name 614
of the clan is shouted out as an exordium to the invocation. This
is the '*maat gwara*', 'the spear of our fathers'. I would suggest that
we have here in the spear-name a symbolic representation of the
clan in its relation to God. God is invoked in relation to the clan
through the spear of the ancestor held in imagination in the hand
of one of his descendants.

If this interpretation is right, then in those sacrifices in which
the clan as a whole is concerned the calling out of the clan spear-
name by the officiant identifies the whole clan with the intention
of the sacrifice as spoken in the invocation. The sacrificial spear in
his hand becomes through the exordium the clan sacrificial spear
through which is symbol the whole clan offers up the victim to
God. The officiant in such sacrifice must therefore be a representa-
tive of the clan, what the Nuer call a *gwon bathwi*; whereas in
personal and piacular sacrifices, in which appeal is made on behalf
of an individual or a number of individuals, anyone can officiate
and the officiant is usually a senior member of the family or kin
of the sacrifice. The intention, and therefore character, of the
sacrificial act is different in the two cases. In the first it is of the
nature of a validation, in the second of the nature of a piacular;
though in some situations there may be a broad overlap. Religion
has always these two sides, the one concerned chiefly with the
social life and the other with the relation of the individual soul
to its God.

¹ Nuer, however, use for God striking a man with lightning the verb *maath*,
cut, and give, to strike in the sense of 'to kill' or 'to punish', and not *yaath*, to
roll in the sense of to throw or to cast.